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ABSTRACT

This paper examines departmental introductory communication course (ICC) textbook publishing practices. Two methodologies for the creation of campus-specific texts are examined--the use of a national publishing house and the use of a local commercial printer. Both options deliver unique advantages and liabilities for speech communication departments whose ICCs are characterized by increased enrollment-per-section, staffed with a variety of instructors (including tenure-track faculty, teaching assistants, and part-time adjuncts), and are taught in locally distinct learning environments. One figure of data showing ICC instructional resources in 11 midwestern universities is included. (Author/SR)

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Departmental Textbook Publishing for the Introductory Communication Course: Pedagogical Boon or Exploitation?

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Abstract

Departmental Textbook Publishing for the Introductory Communication Course: Pedagogical Boon or Exploitation?

This paper examines departmental introductory communication course (ICC) textbook publishing practices. Two methodologies for the creation of campus-specific texts are examined--the use of a national publishing house and the use a local commercial printer. Both options deliver unique advantages and liabilities for speech communication departments whose ICCs are characterized by increased enrollment-per-section, staffed with a variety of instructors (including tenure-track faculty, TA's, and part-time adjuncts), and are taught in locally distinct learning environments.

Textbook selection for the introductory communication course (ICC) often involves a nagging process which can result in the adoption of the lesser of available "evils." A final text choice may be based on what trade-offs have to be made to satisfy a faculty with differing topical interests, who service a population of students compelled to enroll in the course for the primary purpose of fulfilling a basic undergraduate requirement. The ICC is frequently characterized by increased enrollment-per-section, staffed with a variety of instructors (including tenure-track faculty, TA's, and part-time adjuncts), and is offered in locally distinct learning environments. Because the course is normally required for most undergraduates multiple sections must be offered each term. Considering the variety of instructors staffing the ICC and the number of sections offered, a valid issue concerning the need for standardization of course instruction surfaces. One methodology for addressing this issue involves speech communication departments authoring their own campus-specific ICC texts and, in some cases, related workbooks.

There are two basic approaches for doing such: contracting with a national publishing house to serve as the text publisher and marketer for both local distribution and potential adoptions at other campuses; and maintaining total product control through the use of a local commercial printer. Both approaches offer unique advantages and disadvantages, while raising another substantive issue: does departmental ICC textbook publishing offer a pedagogical boon or exploit students in order to meet faculty needs? This essay will detail the benefits and liabilities associated with departmental ICC textbook publishing as they are related to both the national publishing house and local commercial printer options.

Data concerning the number of speech communication departments currently authoring their own campus-specific texts are not readily available. To address this concern, a telephone survey detailing current ICC text requirements among the eleven universities comprising the Big Ten was conducted. The Big Ten universities were surveyed because of the long-standing nature of their speech communication programs. The data are presented in Figure 1. An analysis of the two departmental text publishing approaches follows. [The first analysis is based on Purdue University's involvement with the national publishing house option (the only Big Ten

school to currently publish both its own ICC campus-specific textbook and corresponding workbook). The second analysis is based on the experience of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock with publishing its own campus-specific text through the adoption of the local commercial printer option.]

University	ICC Options (for General Student Population)	Textbook/Workbook Sources
Illinois	Public Speaking course, Speaking and Writing course	Externally prepared national market textbooks; Campus-specific course manuals for students (local commercial printer)
Indiana	Interpersonal Communication course, Public Speaking course	Externally prepared national market textbooks; Campus-specific workbook for Public Speaking course (local commercial printer)
Iowa	Rhetoric (integrated speaking and writing components) [eight credit hour course taken over two semesters]	Externally prepared national market textbooks
Michigan	Hybrid ICC [public speaking and interpersonal communication]	Externally prepared national market textbooks
Michigan State	Hybrid ICC (interpersonal, small group, organizational, mediated communication [no *formal* public speaking training])	Externally prepared national market textbooks
Minnesota	Public Speaking	Externally prepared national market textbook

University	ICC Options (for General Student Population)	Textbook/Workbook Sources
Northwestern	Interpersonal Communication course, Public Speaking course	Externally prepared national market textbooks
Ohio State	Public Speaking course, Small Group course	Externally prepared national market textbooks
Penn State	Public Speaking course, Group Problem-solving course, Analysis of Messages course [each course option is to some extent hybrid with the emphasis on the title topic]	Externally prepared national market textbooks
Purdue	Hybrid ICC (field survey--public speaking, interpersonal, small group, etc.)	Campus-specific textbook and related workbook (national publishing house)
Wisconsin	Introduction to Public Speaking course, Fundamentals of Speech course, Informative Speaking course	Externally prepared national market textbook; for one course option a campus-specific reader/workbook is prepared (local copy shop)

Figure 1 ICC Instructional Resources in the Big Ten

National Publishing House Option

A number of national textbook publishers (e.g., Kendall/Hunt, McGraw-Hill) are actively involved in the production and marketing of locally authored campus-specific ICC texts and related workbooks. Such publishers offer national exposure through their textbook marketing programs and, correspondingly, absorb publicity and other-campus marketing costs. Additionally, the publishers can work through subcontractors to provide necessary support materials that a departmental faculty might find too time consuming to produce (e.g., text indexes). The final product has the same professional quality of competing texts including a nicely designed cover, a number of appropriate illustrations, and a comprehensive index. Several national publishers prefer departmentally authored texts to undergo the same professional publication process that individual authors are bound to. The publishers solicit "blind" peer reviews and request corresponding departmentally authored revisions. The publisher negotiates a royalty percentage with the department that normally does not exceed more than 18% of the retail price of the book. The department receives royalty payments for all local sales and other-campus adoptions and must negotiate its own deal concerning whether local and other-campus sales will receive the same royalty percentage.

Local Commercial Printer Option

Speech communication departments may use departmental desktop publishing software (as accessable as a computer and high resolution laser or ink-jet printer) to write, edit, design and present a "camera-ready" ICC text manuscript to a local commercial printer. The "front end" printing costs are normally deferred by the printer who receives payment from initial campus bookstore sales. The use of a local printer eliminates a third party to share in text proceeds, which allows for as much as 70% of text-generated revenues to

be returned to the department. The adoption of this publishing approach makes the acquisition of "blind" peer reviews more difficult than if handled by a third party. Additionally, support materials (e.g., indexes, glossaries) will have to be locally prepared. In some cases, a departmental faculty may decide to integrate support materials gradually, in subsequent revised editions. This publication option allows the department exclusive control concerning when revisions will be made.

Who and What Choices

Regardless of the publishing option selected someone will have to write the text. The responsibilities associated with text authorship will vary depending on the nature of local speech communication departments. The faculty of a large department (e.g., offering Ph.D., MA, and BA degree plans) that is already actively engaged in research and publication, for example, may view required participation in such a project an imposition. Such a department may request its basic course director to "shoulder the burden." The course director may, in turn, enlist the assistance of GTAs and may still request departmental faculty to participate as chapter reviewers. Members of a department less focused on research (i.e., the directing of theses) and/or publication, may find the authoring of their own campus-specific text illuminating, especially if the department chooses the national publishing house option. For some, the experience of being confronted to the "blind" peer review dimension of the professional publication process may be new and could potentially influence their future teaching and publishing activity.

Departmentally produced ICC text packages can vary. Some departments may require the use of both a text and related workbook. The workbook is a consumable product (i.e., tearout pages, etc.) and cannot be purchased through the used textbook market. Some departments may consider combining the textbook and workbook as a methodology for maintaining a higher sales base (which raises an ethical issue pertaining to the exploitation of a captive audience). In many cases, these materials will be offered as separate products to be able to provide instructional materials at a lower overall cost to students (allowing a number of texts to be acquired

through the "used" market). Additionally, some departments may decide not to require the use of a corresponding workbook. A resultant trade-off would involve the lowering of the overall cost of the course's instructional materials to students, while relinquishing greater standardization of assignments across basic course sections. The larger the number of sections offered each semester, the greater the need will be for including a workbook in the ICC text package (as suggested by four of the Big Ten schools selecting this option).

Speech communication departments publishing their own departmentally authored ICC text packages, following either publishing option, will generate considerable revenues that can be earmarked for departmental use (e.g., equipment acquisitions [faculty computers], faculty retreats, professional development travel funds, and so on). The money to be generated is not the issue that should compel departments to undertake this project. The substantial time investment involved in (and not limited to) authoring a text and possible related workbook, responding to peer reviews (if this dimension is included as part of the process), working with a publishing house or local printer (checking galley proofs for errors, etc.), and managing details concerning campus bookstore sales may minimize the impact of the eventual monetary return.

Discussion

The decision to publish a departmentally authored ICC text package should be based on a faculty's inherent capability of providing ICC students with an instrument that is substantively better than alternative externally prepared texts. The process is laiden with booby-traps, regardless of whether a national publishing house or local commercial printer is used. Care must be taken when using a national publishing house, for example, not to lose sight of the objective to maintain the campus-specific integrity of the text package when faced with the possibility that a national market might generate national "visibility." When using a local commercial printer, deciding to allow useful glossaries and indexes to gradually "evolve" over a number of editions is easier on the faculty than the students comprising the text

package's captive audience. Additionally, some departments using a local commercial printer may need to consider whether their "blind" peer review process is sufficient to perserve their text package's integrity as being "field-wise," in addition to being campus-specific. The admiring reaction of "Look at what we've accomplished!" can best be tempered with a critical look at what might still be missing. Other-campus faculty and students required to purchase a departmentally prepared text package that does not effectively address the above issues may justifiably view the situation as exploitative.

Departmental ICC textbook publishing involves a rigorous process leading to the production of an effective campus-specific text package. The faculty participating in the authoring and/or reviewing of materials in the package may find that the collaborative process associated with this endeavor can positively enhance a collegial and cohesive departmental atmosphere. Additionally, standardization of ICC instruction will be substantively reinforced by the production of an internally generated text package. The use of a campus-specific ICC text usually involves fewer pages and chapters being omitted from assigned readings (a situation that student consumers may find cost-effective). Finally, universities developing a campus-specific ICC curriculum may not be well served by texts generated from the national market. Current ICCs emphasizing speaking and writing (e.g., Illinois, Iowa) and mediated communication (e.g., Michigan State) components support that departmental textbook publishing is a relevant pedagogical option for meeting the needs of campus-distinct basic courses.

Some speech communication departments proficient in desktop publishing may eventually investigate the possibility of creating and marketing a "Publish Your Own Text" software package that would allow all campus-specific text references (e.g., examples of local interest, communication lab units, etc.) to be inserted at appropriate places in the ICC text and related workbooks. The technology is accessible...